

have brought to us delays until the very end of the fiscal year a third of that money. Slow down your effort to try to stop the spread of AIDS, this appropriation bill says. I think that is irresponsible.

If there is any reason for the President to veto this bill, it is in the area of health research and disease prevention. I hope the President vetoes it, sends it back up in a hurry, and says to the Republican leadership: Roll up your sleeves and get serious. If you are going to make cuts in order to achieve some budget goals, don't start with medical research, don't start with children who are suffering from diseases where we might find a cure, don't go to the Centers for Disease Control which has an important mission for all Americans to make this a healthier nation. No, go somewhere else.

I have been elected to the Congress, the Senate, now, for 17 years. There are some areas that are really worth a fight. We can talk about roads and bridges. They mean a lot to a lot of people. But when it comes to education and health, I think that is worth a fight. I invite the President's veto as quickly as possible. Send this bill back up here and say to the leadership, on both sides of the Rotunda, that they have a lot more to do. Balancing this budget on the backs of kids who need special tutorial help to learn to deal with reading and math is unconscionable. Balancing this budget on the backs of thousands who receive assistance from the Women, Infants, and Children Program for nutritional assistance, so babies are born healthy, that is unconscionable.

For those of us who next year again will face a steady stream of people—from Illinois, in my case, Nevada in the case of Senator REID—who come to our office and beg us, please do something about medical research so my child might live, I want to be able to look them in the eye and say: We did the right thing. We encouraged the President to veto an irresponsible bill, a bill which would have delayed medical research for a lot of people across America who are depending on it for their survival.

When it comes down to the closing hours of the session, sometimes things move through quickly and people are anxious to get home. I know I speak for myself and I probably do for many others when I say I am prepared to stay as long as it takes to see that the National Institutes of Health and all their medical research responsibilities do not become part of the political gamesmanship of the end of this session.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 1832

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I understand that S. 1832 introduced earlier by Senator KENNEDY is at the desk. I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1832) to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1978 to increase the Federal minimum wage.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now ask for its second reading and, in addition thereto, object on behalf of the majority.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I understand this bill will be read the second time on the next legislative day?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WARNER. The Senator from Virginia understands the parliamentary situation is I can offer a resolution, a sense of the Senate, in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business.

The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. WARNER. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. WARNER pertaining to the introduction of S. Res. 211 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. MURKOWSKI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HUTCHISON). The Senator from Alaska.

NUCLEAR WASTE POLICY AMENDMENTS ACT OF 1999

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, it is my understanding that it was the leader's intention to lay down the nuclear waste bill, but there has been an objection raised. As a consequence, it is my understanding that we will be discussing the bill, recognizing that there may be procedural action by the leadership at a later date regarding the disposition of this legislation.

It is my intention to simply discuss the merits of the bill for a period that would accommodate the President, as

well as my colleagues, recognizing it is Friday afternoon and there are Members who perhaps have other plans.

While it is not my intention to communicate to this body every thought concerning this matter that I have. I do have, through the cooperation of my staff, probably enough material to take 6 or 7 days. Hopefully, it will not take that long to convince my colleagues that we have a problem in this country with our high-level nuclear waste program.

It is no secret there are not a number of States that are standing in line to take this waste. The fact is, most Members would wish for some type of a magic trick that would make this waste disappear. But the facts are, this waste is with us. It was created by an industry which contributes some 20 to 22 percent of the total electric energy produced in the United States. So it is our obligation to address how we are going to handle that waste.

We have, I think, like the ostrich, put our head in the sand regarding advanced technology addressing high-level nuclear waste that has advanced in other countries, particularly in France, and to a degree Great Britain and Asia.

The technology varies, but the basic premise is that spent fuel coming from our depleted cores within the reactors are taken, and through a chemical process, the plutonium is recovered and returned to the reactors as fuel. This is an oversimplification of the process, but, as a consequence, the proliferation threat of the plutonium is reduced dramatically because it is burned in the reactors. Not every existing reactor can utilize this technology, but technology is clearly available.

What is done with the rest of the waste? It is vitrified. That means the remaining waste is turned into a glass. The lifetime of that material has been reduced dramatically. It still must be stored, but it has a lesser radioactive life.

What we have here is a situation where my good friends on the other side have objected to consideration of this bill.

That objection suggests that they might have some other alternative other than simply delaying a resolution of this problem. If there is another alternative other than delay, I would hope my friends on the other side would bring that to my attention.

For the sake of full disclosure, as the junior Senator from Alaska, I do not have a constituency in my State on this issue. My hands, so to speak, from a self-interest point of view, are pretty clean. Oftentimes we have Members who are trying to foster a particular policy based on an interest in their State. We don't have high-level nuclear waste in Alaska. We have never had a nuclear power reactor, with the exception of a small program back in the